

TESTIMONY FOR HB 2492

April 17th, 2019

Chair Holvey and Rules Committee Members,

Good Afternoon, my name is Mireya and I am a senior sociology major at Willamette University. For the last year I have attended class with individuals currently incarcerated in Oregon State Penitentiary. Together we took classes ranging from politics, gender, sexuality studies and more. While over time the topics changed, our conversations constantly surrounded equity and restorative justice, in which we restore power that has been unrightfully stolen from individuals trapped in our incarceration system. Thus today I am writing in support of HB 2492.

Because of our over policing and skyrocketing incarceration rates, the way the Census counts incarcerated people has remained political. The Census counts residents living in prisons as a whole group once every ten years and uses those numbers for redistricting, ignoring that fact that most individuals are incarcerated for less three years. Prison gerrymandering dramatically changes the way communities are represented at the local and state levels. Creating an image that does not accurately describe that area or people residing in it.

Because Census data is used for redistricting the specific location of populations is critical and we cannot ignore this further. The practice of prison gerrymandering ignores Oregon's state constitution, which says that those who are incarcerated have the right to be, and should be, counted in the community that they originally resided in. By allowing this practise to continue, we not only take away their right to be counted accurately, but also deny the right of their communities to access representation.

I then urge you all to join other states such as California, Delaware, Maryland, and New York who have all already addressed prison gerrymandering. Don't let Oregon fall behind, let's end prison gerrymandering.

Thank you for your time,

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